

## Ebola Virus

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Since December 2013, the Ebola virus has infected more than two thousand people in the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. They believe the virus originates when people are bitten by infected bats or consume contaminated “bush meat” (meat from primates). The virus then spreads from human to human through direct contact with the blood, secretions, or other bodily fluids of infected individuals. Thankfully, Ebola is not an airborne illness, meaning that, unlike the flu, it is not spread through coughing and sneezing.

Symptoms appear 2-21 days after exposure and include fever, nausea, headache, and tiredness in the early stages, followed by vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, and bleeding as the illness progresses. Individuals are contagious once they exhibit symptoms. To avoid confusion with other diseases with similar symptoms in the region, an Ebola diagnosis must be confirmed by blood test at a World Health Organization (WHO) approved laboratory.

The WHO has labeled the latest Ebola outbreak a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” and announced a \$100M response plan for West Africa. There are no known vaccines or proven treatments for Ebola at this time; medical professionals can only treat patients’ symptoms. An experimental drug, ZMapp, has been tried in a few cases, and early results are promising. However, supplies of the drug are exhausted due to its high manufacturing cost and the large quantity needed to treat a single patient. The WHO and CDC have called for increased funding to study the Ebola virus and test proposed vaccines and treatments. In the meantime, medical experts urge people in affected regions to avoid contact with infected individuals and practice careful hygiene, such as washing hands frequently. A helpful article explaining the history and characteristics of the Ebola virus is available at: <http://today.uconn.edu/blog/2014/08/west-africas-ebola-outbreak-a-look-at-the-facts/>.

Pepperdine is taking the following actions in response to this situation:

- Insurance & Risk and the Student Health Center are regularly monitoring updates and briefing University administrators accordingly.
- The Student Health Center contacted four Pepperdine graduate students coming from West Africa about the virus and asked them to be vigilant in monitoring their own health and reporting any symptoms immediately.
- The Student Health Center provided information on Ebola to the Deans of Pepperdine’s five schools.